



# SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

## A WEEKLY REVIEW THAT WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP-TO-DATE



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### Keep Failed Health Care Systems Out of California

We all agree that the need for greater efficiency in the delivery of health care services, more affordability, and increased access to health insurance in California is undeniable. Growth in health care spending far outstrips income and inflation. We clearly need to find ways to make health care more affordable.

Unfortunately, the "solution" being touted by liberals in Sacramento is to scrap our current system for government-mandated healthcare. They want to create a healthcare system modeled after Canada and other European countries. If they are successful in mandating such a healthcare system, it would have catastrophic results.

Canada is a prime example of a failed health care system. Canada's health care system has had a devastating impact on the health of Canadians. There is little access to physicians and even cancer patients must wait for months to begin their treatment.

A *New York Times*, February 26, 2006 article, quoted a local Canadian physician, Dr. Brian Day, about Canada's health care system and ban on private health insurance, "We've taken the position that the law is illegal. This is a country in which dogs can get a hip replacement in under a week and in which humans can wait two to three years."

In the province of Ontario alone, 1.4 million people are without the services of a family doctor, according to the *New York Times*. This national doctor shortage in Canada is one of the consequences of their government-mandated healthcare system. The median wait time between a referral by a family doctor and an appointment with a specialist has increased to 8.3 weeks last year from 3.7 weeks in 1993. Average wait times between a referral by a family doctor and treatment range from 5.5 weeks for oncology to 40 weeks for orthopedic surgery.

In June 2005, the Supreme Court in Canada found that a Quebec provincial ban on private health insurance was unconstitutional when patients were suffering and even dying on waiting lists. The court ruled, "The prohibition on obtaining private health insurance is not constitutional where the public system fails to deliver reasonable services."

#### News of the Week

[Over Thousand Honor Deputy Killed While On Duty](#)

[VICA Supports LAUSD Breakup](#)

[Massive Student Walkout Spreads in Southern California](#)

[Per-Pupil Spending Varies Between California School Districts](#)

[89% Students Pass High School Exit Exam](#)

[Rob Reiner Resigns From First Five Commission](#)

[Antelope Valley Editorial: Will AV Turn into Dumping Ground for L.A. Homeless?](#)

[Press Release: Runner's Bill Passes to Help Community Colleges Build Facilities Faster](#)

It is also a sad example when Canada's provincial health ministers' goal is to bring down the wait time to four weeks for cancer patients to receive radiation therapy and 26 weeks for hip replacements.

Can you imagine thinking that it is a great improvement to have to wait six months before you can receive a critical surgery like a hip replacement? And this is the system that liberals in Sacramento want us to embrace?

Other countries do not fare much better. The United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, to name a few, cite similar problems Canada has experienced – high taxes, long waits, decreased access to quality health care, and a shortage of physicians.

In an effort to fix their rupturing health care systems, many of these countries have begun allowing or in some cases even mandating their citizens to purchase private insurance in addition to the government-mandated “free” health care paid through taxes. This has created a system where people with means pay for private health insurance and receive better care and access to medical services, while others must use the broken government healthcare system, waiting months and even years for critical surgeries.

Knowing these facts, it seems ridiculous that the Legislature would look to Canada or to these other countries as a model. This drastic change would result in the same problems Canada faces – limited access to health care, doctor shortages, and diminished health care quality that we enjoy here in California.

The solution ought to be improving the current system we have in California today. When we breakdown the numbers, an estimated nine percent of the population lacks access to health care. So, we must improve our current healthcare system by making it more affordable and accessible so the nine percent can have access to health care coverage. We can do this by creating more choices and providing more transparency for consumers and businesses.

Arming consumers with more information to make their health care decisions and giving them more choices for health care coverage, will begin to bring costs down and increase access.

What I find troubling is the contingent of legislators who do not want consumers to have more choices and in fact lobby to block additional health care options for Californians. These same legislators are pushing California to adopt a Canadian health care system that does not work.

The fact is consumers are ready and willing to take an active role in managing their health care costs. In fact, numerous studies conclude a supermajority of Americans want more price and quality information, and indicate they would become more involved in managing their healthcare if this information was available.

Our current system makes it almost impossible to shop for the best deal on a routine checkup or tonsillectomy because bona fide pricing information is virtually impossible to obtain. A study by the California HealthCare Foundation found that even in hospitals – where providing information regarding the costs of common procedures is required by state law – potential patients were hard-pressed to come away with concrete estimates.

Many states have already taken steps to simplify their healthcare systems with the goal of educating consumers and creating market-driven systems. By increasing transparency and price information in California, we can improve our healthcare system by simply providing the state's savvy consumers the ability to go shopping.

The bottom line is California should not enact a failed system like Canada's that eliminates choice, decreases health care quality, and decreases access to physicians creating long waits of up to one to two years for any health care service. To truly improve our health care system, we, must start moving it towards a more rational market.

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